

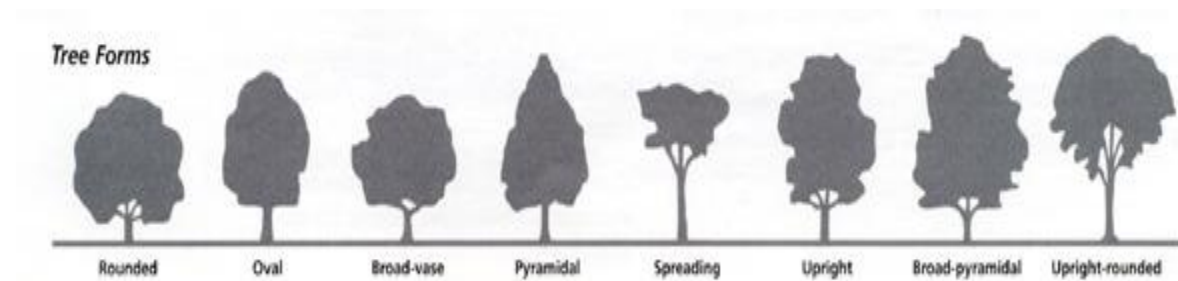
# How to Choose a Shade Tree

Trees, in particular shade trees are the basic component in any landscape plan. They set the stage for the entire grounds design. The type of tree used and their location will enhance curb appeal and determine to a great extent what other plantings are appropriate. Selecting the wrong tree or one planted in the wrong spot can actually detract from the overall landscape. Because of the permanency of trees (50 to 100 years can be common) and their importance in the landscape, care should be taken to select the best species for each situation. You may find it helpful to review the factors listed below along with the list of shade trees to consider before selecting your shade tree or trees.

Trees to Avoid: Yes there are a few trees we should avoid; those found on the list of "Massachusetts Invasive Trees"<sup>1</sup>. (see Invasive tree list on STC web-site), and trees that are susceptible to storm damage, or ones that are hosts to destructive insect and disease pests. For additional information the Plymouth County Extension Office is a good resource.

Tree Height: The large trees reach a mature height of greater than 40 feet. Trees with a mature height between 25 to 40 feet make up the medium-sized group and a relatively few shade trees are considered small; maturing to less than 30 feet tall.

Tree Forms:



Fall Color: Red, orange, yellow and purple are all colors that add beauty in the fall. As an example Sugar Maples, *Acer saccharum* will give a spectacular bright orange to yellow/red.

Site Selection: You know what they say, location, location and location, it is true with trees as well. Ask yourself, what am I trying to accomplish, for instance consider planting a large growing shade tree on the south side of your home to provide shade and cooling as well as curb appeal.

Soil Condition: What are the physical properties of your soil? Is the soil sandy, clay or loam and does it have the ability to hold water and nutrients? Depending on the type of soil you may have to consider amending it in order to support tree growth.

Salt Spray: Parts of Hingham are subject to salt spray drift; either from the ocean or road deicing which can damage trees. Saline soils (salts accumulate in the soil) is not an issue since Hingham averages 30-40 inches of rain most years. see the note section<sup>2</sup> for each of the Shade Trees to Consider trees.

Proximity to other structures: Trees need room to grow and if planted too close to a foundation (particularly old fieldstone foundations) you can cause damage.

Shade Tree Varieties<sup>3, 4</sup> "Shade Trees to Consider" listed below are a selection of trees that have grown well in Hingham's soil conditions and climate. However, this is only a partial list of excellent shade trees to choose from. For more information contact the Plymouth County Agriculture Agent or local garden center/nurseryman. All the trees listed are considered large trees growing 40' or greater at full maturity.

*Acer saccharum* Sugar Maple , cultivars, Green Mountain, Legacy

Growth Rate: Slow to medium

Drainage: Needs a well drained soil

Fall Color: Bright orange, yellow/red

Value: Excellent large shade tree for lawn or street tree planting and has excellent fall color

Notes: can be damaged by salt

*Acer rubrum* Red Maple, cultivars October Glory, Red Sunset

Growth Rate: Medium to fast

Drainage: Will tolerate a wide range of soil conditions, especially moist to wet sites.

Fall Color: Excellent dark red late October to Early November

Value: Excellent shade tree for lawn or street tree planting.

Notes; salt tolerant

*Cercidiphyllum japonica* Katsura Tree

Growth Rate: Medium to fast

Drainage: Needs a well drained soil

Fall Color: Yellow/soft apricot orange.

Value: Beautiful tree reaching a height of 40-60'. Highly under used.

Notes: During the growing season leaves emerge reddish purple and change to a bluish green. There is a question about its salt tolerance.

*Gleditsia triacanthos* var. *inermis* Thornless Common Honey Locust, cultivar Skyline

Growth Rate: Fast

Drainage: Will tolerate dry conditions, very adaptable.

Fall Color: Yellow

Value: Provides a nice dappled shade due to open spreading crown.

Small leaves make fall clean up a minimal chore.

Notes: salt tolerant

Ginkgo biloba, Madenhair tree, cultivars lakeview, Magyar

Growth Rate: slow to Medium

Drainage: Needs a well drained soil

Fall Color: Excellent yellow

Value: Excellent shade tree for lawn or street tree planting. Growth habit is usually pyramidal.

Notes: Extremely free of pest, not salt tolerant.

Liriodendron tulipifera Tulip Tree or Tulip Poplar

Growth Rate: Fast; 15' over 6-8 years

Drainage: Needs a well drained soil

Fall Color: Yellow

Value: Fast growing shade tree; mature height can be 70-90' by 35-50' wide. In the right situation is a good street tree, but not a tree for a small residential property

Note: There is a question about its salt tolerance.

Platanus occidentalis Sycamore, or Buttonwood

Growth Rate: Medium to fast

Drainage: moist, deep, rich well-drained soil, best in full sun

Fall Color: turning yellow-brown

Value: Good tree for lawn area, streets when large spaces are available, good for shade and for decoration with showy exfoliating bark with red to gray-brown color and white inner bark.

Notes: moderately salt and drought tolerant

Quercus palustris Pin Oak, cultivars Crown Right, Green Pillar

Growth Rate: Fast

Drainage: Very tolerant of all soil types and conditions

Fall Color: Bronze or red; color varies from year to year

Value: Tough tree with great appeal, a widely used Oak in Massachusetts

Notes: salt tolerant

Quercus rubra Red Oak, cultivar Aureas, Splendens

Growth Rate: Fast

Drainage: Well-drained soil is needed.

Fall Color: Russet red to bright red in the fall

Value: The Red Oak is a valuable tree for lawns, parks and used with excellent results as a street tree. It has a nice branching structure and grows to be quite old.

Notes: salt tolerant.

Tilia cordata 'Greenspire' Little Leaf Linden cultivars Greenspire, Glenleven

Growth Rate: Medium

Drainage: Needs a well drained soil

Fall Color: Green/yellow

Value: Excellent shade tree for lawn or street tree planting. Growth habit is rounded to pyramidal with dense branches.

Notes: not salt tolerant

Ulmus americana, American Elm, cultivar Valley Forge, New Harmony

Growth Rate: Medium to fast

Form: vase shaped form, the tree is a picture of beauty

Fall Color: yellow, but not great

Value: Excellent shade tree for lawn or street tree planting where space permits. The American Elm is also the Massachusetts State Tree.

Notes: Both cultivars are disease tolerant to Dutch Elm Disease.<sup>5</sup> The cultivar Valley Forge's salt tolerance is moderate to high

Zelkova serrata Japanese Zelkova Tree, cultivars Village Green, Green Vase

Growth Rate: Medium to fast

Drainage: Needs a well drained soil

Fall Color: Striking brick/orange red

Value: A very desirable tree, vase shaped growth habit. Considered to be a replacement for the American Elm which declined as a result of Dutch elm disease.

Notes: There is a question about its salt tolerance.

<sup>1</sup>. Somers, Paul, 2008. A Guide to Invasive Plants in Massachusetts, Published by: MA. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

<sup>2</sup>.Cornell University Information Bulletin 169 "Salt Injury to Roadside Plants,".  
University of Rhode Island Salt List  
Rutgers Cooperative Extension Bulletin № 433, "Suggested Species for the Seashore"  
University of Massachusetts "Road Salt and Trees"

<sup>3</sup>. Dirr, Michael, A. 1998. Manual of Woody Landscape Plants

<sup>4</sup>. Brand, Mark, H. University of Connecticut Database of trees, Shrubs and Vines

<sup>5</sup>. U.S. National Arboretum, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service